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When a Fetus Acquires a Soul and Becomes an Actual Human in Islam

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful!

The development of a pregnancy can be quite a joyous occasion for a husband and wife as they await the delivery of their child. However, to the dismay of many married couples the actual pregnancy does not always make it to fruition. In this instance, it is important for the couple to determine if the pregnancy produced an actual human, so that a proper Janaza can be performed.

The guidelines for determining if a pregnancy produces an actual human are detailed in the sunnah of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.). This fact is evident from a hadith collected by Bukhari that was narrated by Hudhayfa (RA) who reported that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) allegedly said that it is not until after

forty-five days after conception; nearly nine weeks, that the pregnancy produces an actual fetus. The hadith in question reads as follows: "**The angel is sent to the sperm-and-ovum drop (nutfah) after it has settled in the uterus for FORTY OR FORTY-FIVE NIGHTS (nearly 9 weeks after conception) and says, 'Lord! Is it to be wretched or happy?' Then this is inscribed. Then he says, 'Lord! Is it to be male or female?' Then this is inscribed, together with its deeds, its progeny, its term of life, and its sustenance. Then the records are folded up and nothing more is added or subtracted.**'" What is more, the fact that the hadith mentions that it is not until after this forty-five day period (9 weeks after conception) that the angel asks Allah: **'Lord! Is it to be male or female?'** proves that the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) statements are in accordance with modern embryology; i.e., it is not until after the forty-five day period (9 weeks after conception) that an actual fetus is formed with its visible sex organ. This fact is evident from a December 4th, 2012 article titled, "Pregnancy week by week" from the Mayo Clinic's website (www.mayoclinic.com), which reports as follows: "At the beginning of the 11th week of pregnancy, or the ninth week after conception, your baby's head still makes up about half of its length. However, your baby's body is about to catch up, growing rapidly in the coming weeks. Your baby is now officially described as a fetus. This week your baby's eyes are

widely separated, the eyelids fused and the ears low set. Red blood cells are beginning to form in your baby's liver. **By the end of this week, your baby's external genitalia will start developing into a penis or clitoris and labia majora**."

It is also worth mentioning that additional evidence proving that a pregnancy does not produce a living human until after the forty-five day period (9 weeks after conception) is the hadith of Bukhari that was narrated by Anas (RA) who reportedly said: "**Allah Most High has appointed an angel over the uterus who says, 'Lord! It is now a sperm-and-ovum drop (nutfa). Lord! It is now a thing that clings (alaqa). Lord! It is now a thing like chewed flesh (mudghah); i.e., partly formed partly unformed (showing that all of these early stages take place around the first forty-five days of development).' Then, when he wants to complete its fashioning (showing that at this stage (mudghah) the fetus is partly formed and partly unformed with no visible sex organ), he (the angel) asks, 'Male or female; happy or wretched? What is his share of sustenance? What is his term of life?' All this is inscribed [as it is] in his mother's belly.'**" Lastly, a hadith collected by Imam Muslim that was narrated from Hudhayfa ibn Asad reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'After the sperm-and-ovum drop (nutfa) has been [in the uterus] forty-two days, Allah sends it an angel that**

gives it form and fashions its hearing, sight, skin, flesh, and skeleton.'" Thus, it is not until the mudghah stage of development that a miscarried fetus is developed to the point that it can scantily be distinguished from menses. Consequently, if human features have already appeared on the fetus, then the bleeding is classified as nifas.

In view of the above mentioned information, it is also important to note that many authorities deduce that the soul enters the fetus after four months (120 days) of pregnancy due to the wording of the transliteration for hadith No: 4 in An-Nawawi's 40 Hadith. The hadith in question that was narrated by Abdullah bin Masud reads as follows: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) the most truthful, the most trusted, told us: 'Verily the creation of any one of you takes place when he is assembled in his mother's womb; for forty days he is as a drop of fluid, then it becomes a clot for a similar period. Thereafter, it is a lump looking like it has been chewed for a similar period. Then an angel is sent to him, who breathes the ruh (spirit) into him. This Angel is commanded to write four decrees: that he writes down his provision (rizq), his life span, his deeds, and whether he will be among the wretched or the blessed...**'" The transliteration of this hadith clearly says that the fetus goes through three stages of forty days each (nutfah for 40 days,

alaqah for 40 days, and mudgah for 40 days). Then, after the third stage i.e., 120 days, the soul is breathed into the human body. Therefore, the problem arises from the issue of whether the three stages in question actually occur collectively in approximately forty days or a period of forty days each.

Interestingly enough, this narration by Abdullah bin Masud was recorded with different versions wherein some words/terms conflicted with each other, resulting in different versions of the hadith having different meanings regarding a baby's Creation. One such problem stems from the addition of the word "nutfah" (the drop of a fluid). The word "nutfah" is neither found in the narrations collected by Bukhari nor those of Imam Muslim. However, it was added to other narrations including the one chosen by An-Nawawi to provide a better interpretation of the stages of fetal development. Unfortunately, it generated two conflicting views of the creation of mankind in terms of fetal development. In light of this dilemma, the Scientific Research Committee of IslamToday.net provides the following findings of Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo's commentary from al-Nawawi's 40 Hadith, which reads as follows: "In this case, the oversight may substantially change the meaning of the hadith. With this word (nutfah) missing, the hadith can be understood in the following manner: '**Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother's**

abdomen for forty days. It is then a clinging object during that same period. Then it is a lump looking like it has been chewed during the same period.' Hence, all of these stages take place in the first forty days. This way of understanding the hadith is not only consistent with what is considered today as a 'scientific fact,' it is also consistent with the other narrations related to this topic; such as the following three Sahih ahadith from the collection of Imam Muslim, from the section of Kitab al-Qadar, which reads as follows: "**Hudhayfah bin Usayd (RA) narrated: 'After the drop (nutfah) is in the womb for forty or forty-five nights, the angel comes to it and says: 'O Lord, will it be fortunate or unfortunate?' And these matters shall be written. Then he says: 'O Lord, will it be male or female**?'" Likewise, a second hadith reads: "**When the drop (nutfah) passes forty-two nights in the womb, God sends to it an angel who shapes it and creates its hearing, seeing, skin, flesh, and bones. Then he says: 'O Lord, is it a male or a female?' Then your Lord decrees whatever He wills...**'" Lastly, "**The drop (nutfah) remains in the womb for (about) forty nights. Then the angel appears to it...**" As a final point, it is worth mentioning that neither the Quran nor any ahadith on this subject gives a time frame of 120 days.

It is also important to note that after the stage of pregnancy wherein a fetus has fully developed hearing, sight, and feelings, it is automatically classified as a human being. This fact is evident from Surah Al-Sajdah (32:9) of the Quran which reads: **"But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): little thanks do ye give!"** Also, Surah Al-Mu'minun (23:12-13) of the Quran reads: **"Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); Then We placed him As (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made A (mudghah) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh (in rapid succession); then We developed out of it another creature (the human being). So blessed be Allah; the best to create!"**

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